

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 SY-05 MCT-01 IO-13 AID-05  
CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00  
NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11 EB-08 OMB-01  
TRSE-00 COME-00 LAB-04 SIL-01 /108 W  
-----008863 181553Z /46

R 170800Z MAY 78  
FM AMEMBASSY DACCA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9340  
INFO AMEMBASSY COLOMBO  
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD  
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI  
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA  
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINT, ELAB, BG  
SUBJ: JOURNALISTS ARRESTED AFTER PROCESSION  
  
REF: DACCA 2885

1. THE BANGLADESH FEDERAL UNION OF JOURNALISTS YESTERDAY MORNING (MAY 16) ORGANIZED A PROCESSION THROUGH THE DOWNTOWN STREETS OF DACCA, BUT THE MARCHERS WERE TURNED BACK BY POLICE USING LATHIS (BATONS) AND GUN BUTTS. TWENTY-TWO JOURNALISTS WERE ARRESTED AND AT LEAST FOUR WERE INJURED AND ADMITTED TO DACCA MEDICAL COLLEGE. THE PROCESSION BEGAN AFTER THE JOURNALISTS HAD HELD A RALLY AT THE NATIONAL PRESS CLUB TO PUBLICIZE THEIR FIVE-POINT DEMANDS, PRINCIPAL OF WHICH IS THE DEMAND THAT THE WAGE BOARD RECOMMENDATION OF APRIL 1977 BE FULLY IMPLEMENTED BY ALL  
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NEWSPAPERS (REFTEL). THE JOURNALISTS HAVE ALSO DEMANDED COMPLETE PRESS FREEDOM.

2. THE HOLDING OF PROCESSIONS IS STILL FORBIDDEN BY MARTIAL LAW, AND BY MOST ACCOUNTS, THE JOURNALISTS WERE GIVEN WARNING THAT FORCE WOULD BE USED AGAINST THEM. SEVERAL TIMES THE POLICE REPORTEDLY TRIED TO BLOCK THE

PROCESSION OF PERHAPS A HUNDRED PEOPLE, BUT WHEN THE MARACHERS PERSISTED, THE POLICE USED THEIR CLUBS AND MADE ARRESTS TO DISPERSE THE JOURNALISTS. BY AFTERNOON, THE AUTHORITIES HAD RELEASED THOSE ARRESTED, WHO RETURNED TO THE PRESS CLUB TO MAKE PLANS FOR A PROTEST DAY TODAY.

3. IN A PRESS NOTE ON THE AFFAIR, THE BDG STATED THAT SIX POLICEMEN WERE ALSO INJURED IN THE CLASH. THE GOVERNMENT ALSO SAID THAT "IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT JOURNALISTS WHO ARE HELD IN HIGH ESTEEM BY THE PEOPLE SHOULD RESORT TO A WILLFUL VIOLATION OF THE LAW WHILE IT IS EXPECTED OF THEM THAT THEY WILL EDUCATE AND GUIDE THE REST OF THE COMMUNITY ON SCRUPULOUS OBSERVANCE OF THE LAW." THE NOTE WAS CONCLUDED WITH A CONCILIATORY STATEMENT THAT "THE LEGITIMATE GRIEVANCES OF THE JOURNALISTS CAN BE AND WILL BE REDRESSED THROUGH MUTUAL CONSULTATION."

4. IN AN UNRELATED MOVE, THE BDG PRESS INFORMATION DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES HELD A TOKEN STRIKE YESTERDAY TO URGE REVISION OF PAY SCALES, BUT AFTER A MEETING WITH VICE PRESIDENT SATTAR, A DECISION WAS MADE TO POSTPONE FURTHER ACTION.

5. COMMENT: THE JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN BITTER FOR MANY MONTHS ABOUT THE PAY DISPUTE. YESTERDAY'S TROUBLE WAS NOT DIRECTLY RELATED TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. HOWEVER, IT WAS THE FIRST TIME ANY GROUP HAD CHALLENGED THE CONFIDENTIAL

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BAN ON PROCESSIONS, AND IF THE BDG HAD NOT MET THE DELLENCE FIRMLY, THE VARIOUS POLITICAL PARTIES WOULD ALSO WANT TO TEST THEIR STRENGTH IN THE STREETS. MEANTIME, ZIA NEEDS THE JOURNALISTS, PARTICULARLY AS THE ELECTION APPROACHES. FAST WORK WILL BE NECESSARY TO REPAIR THE DAMAGE.  
SCHNEIDER

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
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